

People refer to Protestant congregations, denominations, people, ideas, etc. In the British coronation oath, the monarch avers, “I am a faithful Protestant.” Given differing ideas regarding Protestantism and with 2017 being the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the question, “What is a Protestant?” is especially important.

This question will be answered historically (Where and when did the term Protestant originate? What does this tell us about its meaning?), theologically (What are the key doctrines of Protestantism?) and ethically (What are the crucial aspects of the morality and lives of Protestants?). Our answer will get to the heart of the identity of Protestantism, for we will not deal with secondary or peripheral issues but what Protestantism essentially is.

So what is the historical origin of the word Protestant? The term Protestant arose in what country? Germany (not Britain). In what city? Speyer in southwest Germany. In what century? The sixteenth century. In what year? 1529, twelve years after Martin Luther nailed the *Ninety-Five Theses* to the church door in Wittenberg.

To explain more fully, the Imperial Diet (or general assembly) of the Holy Roman Empire met in Speyer in 1529. The Roman Catholic majority decided that Martin Luther was rightfully under the imperial ban (i.e., he was reckoned legally dead, so that anyone was allowed to rob, injure or kill him without any judicial consequences); Luther’s writings and teachings were forbidden; the Reformation was not allowed to spread.

However, six princes and fourteen imperial cities *protested* against this decision: We must follow our consciences in submission to the Word of God! The preaching of the Holy Scriptures must not be bound!

These Protestants had the same spirit as Martin Luther, who declared in 1521 at Worms, another Imperial Diet, eight years before Speyer, “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well-known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” In this famous statement, you will notice that Luther refers three times to the Word of God or the Scriptures and twice to his conscience, for his conscience was bound to the Word.

The first Protestants in 1529 and Martin Luther had the same spirit as “Peter and the other apostles” in Acts 5:29, who testified, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” All these believers in Jesus Christ took a stand for God’s truth before hostile authorities, displaying spiritual courage at great personal risk.

Rev. Stewart

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Our Identity in Christ (4)

A significant part of human identity comes through our inclusion in a larger entity, our place amidst a group or groups of other people. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are part of the greatest society and institution in the history of the world!

We are not merely members of some political party or sports club or social group. We belong to the body of Jesus Christ Himself! We are part of the one, holy, catholic (or universal) and apostolic church. As members of Christ’s body, we have been elected and gathered, we are being preserved and we will be glorified. As those who are in the church, ours is the only group or society which will pass into the new creation.

In the church is our family—for ever! In the church are our friends—for ever! Obviously, our family and friends are part of our identity.

It is our *self*-identification that we belong to the Triune God and, therefore, are in His church: “One shall say, I am the LORD’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel” (Isa. 44:5). We make this declaration of our identity deliberately, unashamedly and gladly.

What is my identity in Jesus Christ as regards the future? It is not like those who know not Christ, who live in the despair, fear, worry, meaninglessness and ignorance of unbelief and hopelessness, without the Bible’s teaching on the last things.

We are strangers and pilgrims here in this world, for our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We live by hope (cf. Rom. 8:24-25), for we are assured by the Holy Spirit of our election, redemption, salvation, preservation and glorification.

What about beyond this life? At death, we will be with Jesus Christ our Lord in the presence of God (Phil. 1:21-23). We will join the church triumphant and fellowship with the holy angels. We will be entirely sanctified as regards our spirits or souls.

This age will end with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the general resurrection. Our dead bodies are not merely fertilizer for trees; they will be transformed into glorified bodies like that of Christ Himself (Phil. 3:21).

The Judgment Day will be the public vindication of the Triune God in all His works. Thus it will also be the justification of His church in Jesus Christ before all men and angels, both good and evil.

The new heavens and the new earth will be our eternal inheritance as the sons and daughters of the living God. We shall be given new names—perfect, wonderful identities in Christ for ever (Rev. 2:17; 3:12; 22:4)!

Rev. Stewart

The More-Loving-Than-God Argument (4)

With this *News*, I conclude my answers to a reader who wanted responses to questions put to him in support of the notion that God loves absolutely everybody.

Question 5: “Do you believe God only really cares for a few individuals? If He does, then so should you ... or else you will not be like Him.”

I think this question, to be understood, requires an additional sentence: “If God loves only a few, to be like Him, we should also love only a few; but that would be contrary to God’s command to us to ‘love all men.’” We will assume that this is part of the question.

Though I have already answered this question, I will repeat what I said. God does not love merely “a few;” He loves the world for which Christ died and the world that believes in Christ (John 3:16)—“a great multitude, which no man could number” (Rev. 7:9).

Again, it is clear from Scripture that God loves His elect church and hates the reprobate wicked (e.g., Ps. 5:5). Further, we are to love our “neighbour;” nowhere does God command us to love all men absolutely. We are to love our neighbour for we do not know who are elect and who are not. We are to love our neighbour by preaching the gospel and witnessing to him, for God uses these means to save His elect and to punish those who reject the gospel, “whereunto also they were appointed” (I Pet. 2:8). If we know that our neighbours are truly elect, we still bring the Word of God to them to teach them, encourage them, comfort them, etc. They are one with us in the household of faith and we do all we can to assist them in their sometimes difficult path.

Question 6: “What if your son is a reprobate? If God desires and intends for him to end up in perdition, and you, being a Christian, who loves his neighbour, want him to be in heaven, are you making yourself more loving than God?”

This is a very strange question. Scripture is clear that God has eternally and sovereignly elected His church. He has also, to manifest His justice, sovereignly determined that some should perish because of their sin. We do not know who are elect and who are reprobate: God does (Rom. 9:1-24).

Hence, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. We are to do this because God uses our witness, in connection with the preaching of the Word, to save His elect. We witness because we want the elect to be saved and we do not always know, especially outside our family and church, who are elect and who are not.

When we bring up our children, we witness to them (for they too are our neighbours) and do so in our faith in the God who has promised to save us and our children. We know too that the doctrine of sovereign predestination also cuts through family lines. That is, we know that God has not promised to save all our physical children. In the covenant lines, there are “Jacobs” but there are also “Esaus” (Rom. 9:10-13).

Covenant parents’ greatest pain is seeing their children forsake God’s ways and live in the world. As one father, who had a son killed in a car accident and a daughter who went astray, said to me, “Pastor, it was easier to go to the cemetery.”

But covenant parents pray every day, “Thy will be done.” God’s will is absolutely

determinative for them. When they see their child go astray, they pray, with earnest cries, that he or she may repent. But if that is not the will of God, they bow before Him who does all things for His own glory and confess Him to be God alone. So David wept bitterly over Absalom his son, and Paul expressed his heart’s desire that all Israel be saved, when he knew that this was not God’s will (Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1-2). *Prof. Hanko*

The Lambeth Articles (1595)

1. God from eternity has predestined some men to life, and reprobated some to death.
2. The moving or efficient cause of predestination to life is not the foreseeing of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything innate in the person of the predestined, but only the will of the good pleasure of God.
3. There is a determined and certain number of predestined, which cannot be increased or diminished.
4. Those not predestined to salvation are inevitably condemned on account of their sins.
5. A true, lively and justifying faith, and the sanctifying Spirit of God, is not lost nor does it pass away either totally or finally in the elect.
6. The truly faithful man—that is, one endowed with justifying faith—is sure by full assurance of faith of the remission of sins and his eternal salvation through Christ.
7. Saving grace is not granted, is not made common, is not ceded to all men, by which they might be saved, if they wish.
8. No one can come to Christ unless it be granted to him, and unless the Father draws him: and all men are not drawn by the Father to come to the Son.
9. It is not in the will or power of each and every man to be saved.

The *Lambeth Articles* were drawn up by Dr. William Whitaker, Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, with input from Dr. Richard Fletcher (Bishop of London), Dr. Richard Vaughan (Bishop-elect of Bangor) and Humphrey Tyndall (Dean of Ely).

The *Articles* were formally approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. John Whitgift), the Archbishop of York (Dr. Matthew Hutton) and other prelates convened at Lambeth Palace, London (20 November, 1595). The Archbishop of Canterbury, sent the *Lambeth Articles* to the University of Cambridge a few days later, not as new laws or decrees, but as an explanation of certain points already established by the laws of the land.

The *Lambeth Articles* were never officially added to the Church of England’s *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563). They were, however, accepted by the Dublin Convocation of 1615 and engrafted on the *Irish Articles* (1615). In the Church of Ireland, the *Lambeth Articles* obtained for some time a semi-symbolical authority. It is stated that they were exhibited at the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619) by the English deputies, as the judgment of the Church of England on Arminianism.

Sadly, today, most Anglican (and other) churches around the world have fallen into Arminian free-willism, and the faithful *Lambeth Articles* are either unknown or rejected.